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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 3 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman:	Mr. Al Bayati	(Iraq)
later:	Mr. Ballestero (Vice-Chairman)	(Costa Rica)
later:	Mr. Al Bayati	(Iraq)

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06-55182 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 60: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/61/99)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*)

(c) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (*continued*) (A/61/151)

(d) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/61/167)

1. **Mr. Gaisenak** (Belarus) said that over the past 10 years, his Government had been implementing an economic policy with a strong social emphasis. The key priorities were education, employment, health care and care for older persons, a practical demonstration of the Government's commitment to encouraging social equality while promoting economic growth. Belarus had an annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of over 10 per cent and its Gini index had been under 0.3 per cent for the past 10 years. The unemployment rate of under 1.5 per cent was the lowest in Eastern Europe and the Government was implementing comprehensive measures to enhance the position of professionals on the labour market and increase job opportunities for certain professions. National and regional programmes were in place to increase employment and retrain the unemployed for occupations that were in high demand on the labour market.

2. Education and literacy were key contributors to social and economic development. Education was a top priority for social and economic policy in Belarus, where spending on education accounted for around 6 per cent of GDP. Secondary education was free and higher education was available free to all on the basis of competition. Special emphasis was given to encouraging equal rights to education for rural and urban youth. For years, the education system had achieved one of the highest adult literacy levels in the world, namely, 99.7 per cent.

3. Social policy in Belarus traditionally focused on guaranteeing adequate care for older persons, especially World War II veterans. Four national laws and five State programmes provided the legal framework for such protection. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's appeal for increased efforts to ensure social equality while promoting economic growth and believed that national and international measures aimed at eradicating poverty and cutting unemployment should also be strengthened. It confirmed its readiness to work for a strengthened United Nations capacity in the area of social development and hoped to become a member of the Economic and Social Council in January 2007.

4. **Ms. Hastaie** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the international community's efforts to bring about prosperity and well-being for all nations had been adversely affected by a number of trends, including socio-economic inequalities among nations and continents and policies that prevented the constructive integration of countries into the international system. Unilateral sanctions, interference in trade relations and actions such as invasion, occupation, threats and arbitrary use of force also limited the ability of countries to develop modern technologies and generate resources for social development.

5. Many developing countries continued to face high levels of structural unemployment, yet expansion of decent employment for all was a prerequisite for overcoming poverty. Her Government remained committed to achieving the goals of the World Summit for Social Development and United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to social development. It also sought to promote policies and develop institutions and programmes that balanced equity and social justice with a concern for economic growth and human development. A review of its progress in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit and the Millennium Development Goals showed that it was making significant efforts to meet the recommended targets by 2015, although the pace and quality of those efforts needed to be strengthened.

6. Noting the devastating impact of natural disasters on social and economic infrastructures, she stressed the importance of the cooperation and partnership of the international community in extending assistance to

national governments at all stages of preparedness, rapid response, recovery and reconstruction. The illicit cultivation and trafficking of narcotic drugs was another major threat to economic growth and sustainable development. As a transit country, Iran suffered greatly from the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs. No single government could tackle the problems created by that phenomenon without the cooperation and active involvement of all countries concerned. Her delegation called on the international community to consider urgent action in that area.

7. **Ms. Backlund** (Finland), speaking as the youth representative of Finland, said that a record number of youth delegates had participated in the General Assembly's 2005 review of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Although that Programme was not on the agenda of the current session, it should not be forgotten that young people accounted for half the world's population and that they were ready to assume responsibility for their own future. They should be given opportunities to do so by being treated as equal partners. To that end, she urged the inclusion of more youth delegates in Member States' delegations.

8. She emphasized the crucial importance of the education of girls and young women for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Education gave young people the key to social advancement and control over their own lives and was essential for economic growth. She urged the United Nations to place the creation of jobs and educational opportunities for young people much higher on its list of priorities.

9. **Ms. Sund** (Norway), speaking as the youth representative of Norway, said that half the world's young people were living in poverty and almost a quarter in extreme poverty. Young people also accounted for nearly half of all new HIV infections in the world. The key to changing that situation was education. Universal primary education was the focus of the second Millennium Development Goal, but achieving that goal by 2015 was not enough: the education provided must be of good quality and relevant to children's everyday lives. A strong system of secondary and tertiary education was also essential to empower people to participate in society and promote development. Without education, people did not have the tools necessary for entering the many arenas of power at the national and international levels.

10. Three groups of young people were especially vulnerable in terms of education and influence: indigenous people, girls and children and youth in conflict zones. Education for indigenous people must be empowering and respectful of their culture. Girls — and women — should have equal access to education. Children in conflict zones were missing out on childhood and schooling. Education was an area where political decision-making at all levels should include youth participation. The United Nations was another. She urged all governments to focus on strengthening the entire education systems of developing countries to enable them to provide good-quality education that was relevant to everyday life, respectful of local culture and sensitive to the needs of marginalized groups. She urged the General Assembly to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, called on all governments to eliminate gender disparities at all levels of education by no later than 2015 and urged the international community to take responsibility for the education of children and youth in conflict zones by ensuring that education as a humanitarian response was adequately funded and coordinated and that a percentage of the funds raised through United Nations flash appeals for emergencies was earmarked for the education sector. Lastly, she urged governments to include youth representatives when issues related to youth were being debated and to send youth delegates to the General Assembly.

11. **Ms. Klein** (Australia), speaking as the youth representative of Australia, said that in the past year she had consulted with young people throughout Australia and listened to their views on issues that were important to them. She had found that education and empowerment were crucial to mobilizing and inspiring young people to take charge of their lives and reach their full potential. The meaning of education had evolved from conventional classroom studies to providing support to individuals that empowered them and gave them the confidence to take up challenges and achieve their dreams. She had witnessed an example of that broader focus in a rural community in Australia where, through a combination of education, peer support and activities aimed at raising self-esteem, young indigenous women had been empowered to overcome a culture of abuse and discrimination to pursue their dreams of finding jobs, finishing school and even attending university.

12. She had witnessed the importance of education not only in Australia but throughout the world. For instance, she had been involved in the development of a school for over 130 underprivileged young people in Bamako, Mali. Students at that school were equally motivated to take charge of their lives and break the cycle of poverty. She had also met a group of young men in prison in Australia who had talked about how education had increased their faith in community and improved their self-esteem.

13. Her generation needed to be educated so that it could tackle the challenges left it by the current generation. The most important issue for young people everywhere was that everyone should be equal and should be treated with respect. Young people were powerful, intelligent and wise and a creative resource that must be tapped at what was a critical time in world history. They should not be disregarded because of their perceived naïveté or lack of experience, for that could actually create the drive and enthusiasm needed to bring about change. She urged the international community to include young people in the decision-making process, to educate them and to allow them to grow so they too could make a difference.

14. **Ms. Hughes** (United States of America) said that her delegation welcomed the opportunity to highlight recent efforts to combat illiteracy. Literacy was critical to successful democracy, employment generation and the defeat of terrorism. Unfortunately, over 800 million people across the globe, including 771 million adults, were illiterate. More than two thirds of the illiterate adults were women, and 61 per cent of illiterate children were girls. In 2005, United States foreign assistance programmes in education had contributed over US$ 492 million to basic education and educational activities in 43 developing countries. The African Education Initiative was a US$ 600 million multi-year programme consisting of scholarships for girls, textbooks and teacher training opportunities. The Textbooks and Learning Materials Programme would provide 15 million textbooks and learning materials and help build capacity in Senegal, Ethiopia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Ghana.

15. The United States and other G-8 and Broader Middle East and North African leaders were working to reduce illiteracy rates by half over the next decade. The Broader Middle East and North African Initiative would create a network to share best practices among nations in that region and to establish common measurement standards for achieving literacy goals. Her Government funded literacy programmes for out-of-school youth and adults, particularly women and girls, in other countries in Asia and the Near East. Training for teachers and volunteers was also supported.

16. Since 2002, her Government had supported a teacher exchange programme for women teachers from Afghanistan. The Afghanistan Teacher Education Project enhanced the professional skills of women teachers and administrators by bringing them to the United States for university programmes lasting six to eight weeks. Nearly 100 women educators had already graduated from the programme.

17. In September 2006, First Lady Laura Bush had hosted the White House Conference on Global Literacy in her capacity as Honorary Ambassador for the United Nations Literacy Decade. Three panel discussions had been held on Mother/Child Literacy, Literacy for Health and Literacy for Economic Self-sufficiency. Mrs. Bush had announced that the American people would contribute US$ 1 million for the implementation of the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which gathered data to determine why certain populations and subgroups had lower literacy rates than others. Her Government recognized that reporting education outcomes by population and subgroup helped to identify students whose needs were not being met and it aimed to support other countries to do the same. Her delegation was encouraged by the leadership provided by UNESCO in that critical area of social development.

18. **Ms. Al-Madhani** (United Arab Emirates) said that it was regrettable that more than 10 years after the World Summit for Social Development, over half the world's population continued to lack the basic requirements for living with dignity in a secure society and still faced poverty, disease, unemployment, illiteracy, organized crime and armed conflict. She commended the work of the United Nations in the area of social development but said that international efforts to implement the outcomes of the relevant conferences must be stepped up in order to fulfil pledges to improve social and humanitarian conditions for all.

19. Her country had made great progress in the area of social development, as demonstrated by its ranking among the countries having "high human development"

in the *Human Development Report 2005*. Per capita income had grown, government expenditure on education, health and social security had increased, elementary school enrolment rates were high for both boys and girls, illiteracy rates were decreasing and there was greater participation by women in the work force and in decision-making. Progress in the health sector included the eradication of polio and malaria and the low incidence of HIV/AIDS.

20. Her Government attached great importance to the development of human resources, particularly youth, disabled persons and the elderly, and provided free education at all levels to that end. The National Human Resource Authority for Development and Employment coordinated the requirements of development, the labour market and human resources, promoted graduate employment, especially in the all-important private sector, and encouraged the updating of school curricula to meet changing labour-market needs.

21. Her Government had recently issued a number of laws for the protection of human rights, particularly the rights of children, and in February 2006 the first "human rights civil society" had been launched to promote human rights, foster social, economic and political justice and provide education on the rights and obligations of the individual towards the State and vice-versa. The Government paid particular attention to young people especially those in difficulty, for whom special rehabilitation centres had been set up, staffed by specialized psychologists and social workers. Persons with other special needs were cared for in appropriate centres, and vocational training programmes for the disabled had been enhanced to facilitate their integration in society.

22. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) noted the continuing validity of the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade. The Secretary-General's report in document A/61/99 emphasized the need to bear in mind the structural causes of poverty, such as unequal income distribution, vulnerability and insecurity, in formulating effective poverty-eradication strategies.

23. Since 2002, her Government had been implementing a plan embodying seven tools for equity, as a result of which education coverage had been increased with the goal of achieving universal coverage by 2010, technical training had been provided to nearly 4 million Colombians and 300,000 university places had been created. It had extended its literacy programme by introducing a national literacy plan that was expected significantly to reduce the country's illiteracy rate, which was currently 8.6 per cent. Other education actions included the provision of food to students and subsidies to vulnerable families with children at school, many of whom had been displaced by violence. Health care had been extended, with the goal of achieving universal coverage by 2010. Subsidies were being provided to older persons living in extreme poverty and a comprehensive policy was being drawn up in that area. Policies to improve agricultural production and rural quality of life were also being implemented, including programmes for the substitution of illicit crops, which had a significant social and environmental impact.

24. Her Government had also introduced a policy of democratic security, as a result of which over 40,000 members of violent groups had been demobilized, crime and insecurity had been reduced and a more favourable environment for investment, economic growth and social development had been created. Strategies for equity, reduction of unemployment and increased security have enabled the poverty rate to be reduced from 60 per cent to 49 per cent. The goal was to reduce that rate to 35 per cent by 2010 and 15 per cent by 2019. A government-funded social protection network against extreme poverty was intended to reduce extreme poverty from 15 to 8 per cent over the next four years.

25. While primary responsibility for poverty eradication lay with individual States, the commitment, efforts and financial support of the international community were also essential in order to reach the Millennium Development Goals in the area of social development. The greatest possible coordination was required between international actors working in the field of social development and government, civil society and business, so that resources were allocated to a comprehensive strategy that was in keeping with countries' own plans for achieving the Millennium Goals. It was essential to increase the emphasis on social issues and develop relevant strategies backed by the United Nations system, in subregional and regional forums. It was also important that developing countries participate in decision-making by United Nations

organs and international financial institutions that affected social development. Lastly, the building of countries' institutional, normative and policymaking capacity in the area of social development needed support.

26. **Mr. Amoros Nuñez** (Cuba) noted that, despite all the promises made over the years, the world was far more unjust and unequal than it had been at the time of the World Summit for Social Development. Despite all the discussions on how to eradicate extreme poverty and the progress claimed in that regard, a sixth of the world's population continued to survive on less than one dollar a day and almost half on two dollars a day. There had been no progress in poverty eradication in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and West Asia, in other words, in most of the developing world. It was shameful that millions of people continued to starve, that millions of children continued to die from preventable causes and that millions of adults were illiterate.

27. The reason for that lack of progress was that powerful countries continued to perpetuate a world economic and political order — or disorder — that fostered inequality and led to chaos in a unipolar world for the benefit of a few nations. Those countries promoted the idea that the world's poor were a threat to peace and security and they allocated 10 times as much money to military expenditure as to official development assistance (ODA), which was far below the level pledged. Those countries continued to massively subsidize their own agricultural sectors, while fomenting inequality at home and abroad. Such rampant inequality could be eliminated only through solidarity and cooperation.

28. He recalled the socio-economic changes brought about in his country by the Cuban Revolution in its efforts to build a just society, despite all the risks and threats and the blockade imposed by the United States of America, which continued to be the main obstacle to more rapid social progress in Cuba. Through policies of equity and welfare, justice and dignity, economic development had been harmonized with social development and no worker had been left behind. The country's free health care and education system, high rates of school enrolment, high teacher-pupil ratios and situation of full employment bore witness to those efforts.

29. Genuine cooperation was vital for expanding social development. Accordingly, thousands of Cuban health care, sports and education workers were serving in some 110 developing nations. Cuba's scholarship programme had benefited hundreds of thousands of third world students, particularly medical students. The sight of thousands of foreign patients had been restored free of charge in Cuba and programmes providing advice on literacy training and secondary education had been implemented worldwide. It was necessary to fight for a more just and equitable world economic order and to establish true solidarity among peoples in order to turn words and dreams into reality.

30. **Ms. Naraghi** (Sweden), speaking as the youth representative of Sweden, said that while the United Nations system was sometimes perceived to be all about words, those words translated into important commitments, which in turn must be translated into action. The many examples of injustice, war, poverty and dictatorship in the world were often the result of countries' failure to respect common international agreements. For instance, despite article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, many people, including young people and youth organizations, did not have the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Despite the efforts of the international community, other people were still living under foreign occupation and thousands of young people were forced to live in refugee camps. Despite the commitments made in Cairo in 1994, many young women were still victims of unsafe abortions and female genital mutilation. It was unacceptable that such commitments were arbitrarily broken and everyone must strive to respect them and translate them into action.

31. Young people were particularly vulnerable in all countries, especially in societies experiencing conflict or oppression but also in those living in peace and welfare. The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond was therefore of great importance. For it to achieve results, cooperation, especially cooperation with youth in civil society, was essential. Young people must be seen not only as a target group but also as important players in their own right. Such cooperation could take the form of consultations with youth-led initiatives and democratic youth structures and the participation of young people's non-governmental organizations in implementing national and local youth policies. Youth participation at the United Nations should also be

increased, in line with the commitments made in General Assembly resolution 60/2 on policies and programmes involving youth. She urged all Member States to ensure that their delegations to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly included a youth delegate.

32. Youth policy should be twofold, involving the power to decide and the right to welfare. Young people had the same human rights as other human beings. They should be involved in the development of reliable indicators to measure the action taken to turn the World Programme of Action for Youth into reality. That was a matter of dignity, credibility and efficiency.

33. **Mr. Kallehauge** (Denmark) welcomed the upcoming adoption of the draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was an important milestone in the history of the disability movement. He praised the Government of Mexico as the driving force behind the Convention, the commitment of the many other participants from Governments, civil society and disabled people's organizations to reaching agreement on the text and the excellent work done by the Ambassador of New Zealand, in steering the negotiations. He expressed regret at the decision to attach a footnote to article 12 of the Convention saying that in Arabic, Chinese and Russian, the term "legal capacity" referred to "legal capacity for rights", rather than "legal capacity to act". Taken literally, having rights on the basis of which one could not act amounted to having no rights at all. The footnote was not only harmful but nullified the effects of the entire Convention in countries that accepted it. He therefore called for its deletion.

34. **Mr. Rudkjøbing** (Denmark), speaking as the youth representative of Denmark, said that real involvement of young people in developing and implementing policies that concerned them was the key to strong and sustainable development. Such involvement must be strengthened even further if the Millennium Development Goals were to be met. He commended the World Bank for choosing to focus on youth in its *World Development Report 2007*, as that would provide much-needed data about children and young people. He hoped that trend would continue. Young people could be agents for positive change in society, but adults' failure to recognize their capabilities needed to be overcome in order to ensure greater participation by young people in matters that concerned them. That would lead to better decisions and should take place at all levels, local, national and international. He therefore looked forward to seeing more young people and youth representatives at General Assembly sessions in the years to come.

35. **Mr. Tin** (Myanmar) said that the international community was still far from achieving the goals and targets set at the World Summit for Social Development and during the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. While attaining social development goals was chiefly the responsibility of national Governments, developing countries needed the support of their development partners in that regard. An increase in ODA was therefore required. Many of the least developed countries (LDCs) were unable to allocate adequate resources to social development because of their debt-servicing obligations. Creditor countries and institutions should therefore take steps to resolve the debt crisis and reach the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) to official development assistance.

36. The promotion of equitable economic and social development was a national priority in Myanmar. The virtual end of the insurgency had enabled the Government to implement programmes aimed at narrowing the socio-economic development gap between rural and urban areas. Under one programme, substantial resources had been allocated to development in remote border areas and the provision of alternative livelihoods to opium farmers, which had led to a significant decline in opium production.

37. Another programme involved the establishment of 24 special development zones throughout the country, with special emphasis on education, health and infrastructure development. A third programme focused on integrated rural development and improving the livelihoods of rural people. The Government had also made efforts to boost agricultural production, food security and farmers' incomes through mechanization and major infrastructure projects.

38. Despite international efforts to promote literacy, millions of adults around the world still lacked basic literacy skills. In Myanmar, the Government had been implementing a long-term national plan for the promotion of education, under which many new schools had been opened, primary school enrolment had increased and the literacy rate had improved. The provision of non-formal education programmes had also helped to improve literacy.

39. HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis were considered diseases of national concern in Myanmar. A programme of action drawn up in conjunction with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS had led to a reduction in the HIV/AIDS infection rate. Programmes of immunization against measles had led to an increase in the number of children immunized and further efforts to achieve total coverage would soon be under way, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Significant progress had also been made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the areas of health, education, access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation.

40. The issue of ageing was not a serious problem in Myanmar, as the proportion of older people in the population was relatively small and the elderly were traditionally cared for within the family. Nonetheless, efforts to address the issue of ageing in line with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing would be continued.

41. **Ms. Enkhtsetseg** (Mongolia) expressed concern at the slow and uneven progress in implementing international commitments on global poverty reduction. In many countries, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals was being hampered by capacity constraints and the support of the international community was therefore needed.

42. Mongolia had produced its first national report on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in 2004. The national goals had since been mainstreamed into the guidelines for the country's economic and social development and appropriate funds had been allocated from the State budget. The Government was also elaborating a comprehensive development strategy based on the Millennium Development Goals. The latest national statistics indicated that the country was on track to achieve most of the goals on schedule. However, poverty levels remained high and needed to be tackled more aggressively.

43. Her Government had taken the innovative step of adopting an additional goal on promoting human rights, fostering democratic governance and combating corruption. In that context, the Parliament had recently passed a new law against corruption, a phenomenon which significantly impeded development. In addition, a new anti-corruption body was to be set up.

44. Under Millennium Development Goal 8, on developing a global partnership for development, her Government was working on issues relating to landlocked countries and was implementing a pilot project with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the role of trade and transportation in achieving human development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. It spent significant resources on transport costs related to imports and exports which could be put to other, better use. She called for the full and timely implementation of the declaration recently adopted at the first-ever Summit of Landlocked Developing Countries.

45. Inadequate implementation of development objectives was closely linked with shortage of resources. Despite the increase in ODA in recent years, the 0.7 per cent of GNP target was still far from being achieved. Political will was needed to close the gap between commitments made and action taken. Efforts were also needed to ensure that developing countries enjoyed the fruits of globalization.

46. Lastly, national and international efforts to achieve the expected outcomes of the United Nations Literacy Decade should be intensified. Literacy was recognized as one of the most powerful tools for poverty reduction, yet nearly 800 million adults worldwide lacked basic literacy skills. In that regard, Mongolia had offered to host an Asia-Pacific regional midterm review of the Decade, in cooperation with UNESCO and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Her delegation intended to submit an updated resolution on the Decade and would welcome the input of other delegations.

47. **Mr. Nguyen Tat Thanh** (Viet Nam) welcomed the recent finalization of the draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It was the shared responsibility of Member States to work towards its early entry into force. Much remained to be done, however, to protect persons with disabilities from poverty. It was imperative that, at the national and international levels alike, the costs and benefits of economic development should be distributed in accordance with the principles of social equity and justice. Similarly, the commitment made by developed countries to allocate 0.7 per cent of GNP to ODA

should be honoured and ways found of alleviating the developing countries' debt burden.

48. His Government was maintaining steady progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, while making every effort to harmonize economic growth with social equity and justice. That was reflected in its promotion of universal primary education, the implementation of microcredit schemes for women in rural areas, socioeconomic development programmes for rural, mountainous and remote areas, employment funds, particularly for persons with disabilities, and literacy programmes for ethnic minorities. By 2010, the level of spending on education was expected to reach 20 per cent of the State budget. Currently, the focus was on action to improve the situation in poor and remote areas through innovative approaches such as the provision of non-formal education at community level in cooperation with UNESCO.

49. **Mr. Al-Shemli** (Oman) said that the eradication of illiteracy was essential to achieving comprehensive development. Under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, Oman had made great strides in traditional literacy, which focused on basic reading and writing, functional literacy, which focused on vocational needs, and comprehensive literacy, which addressed the social dimension of the issue. The National Plan to Guarantee Education for All by 2015 included a plan to reduce illiteracy rates. The Ministry of Education had opened centres for adult education and literacy in all regions. The Government had made use of innovative techniques based on regional and international experience in implementing its programmes, such as the Ministry of Education programmes for family education for women and for broadcasting literacy courses on television. In implementation of the resolutions of the World Education Forum, held in Dakar in 2000, the Ministry had made efforts to provide educational opportunities to all segments of society, including literacy programmes for blind and deaf adults, parallel education for older students in special situations and the innovative "learning village" initiative. Many of those programmes had been incorporated in its seventh Five-Year Development Plan (2006-2010). The country also had cooperation and exchange programmes with other States and with international and regional organizations such as UNESCO and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). With each passing year, more citizens, students and adults were being liberated from the darkness of illiteracy, creating a human base for comprehensive development.

50. **Mr. Munz** (Germany), speaking as a youth representative of Germany, recalled that young people had played a major role in the reunification of Germany 16 years previously. However, many obstacles prevented young people around the world from developing their potential and contributing to their societies. Millions of young people had never enjoyed the benefits of education and lacked basic literacy skills, a situation which condemned them to a future of unemployment, poverty and marginalization. Many States were failing to address that problem.

51. Marginalized young people and their interests were barely represented in political processes, even those directly affecting them. That situation could not be allowed to continue. He called on the international community to ensure that all young people had access to education, which was the key to decent work and a life lived in dignity. Every dollar invested in education represented a better contribution to national and international peace and security than any dollar invested in weapons.

52. **Ms. Apel** (Germany), speaking as a youth representative of Germany, said that young people on the margins of society or with inadequate education were unable to contribute their potential to the cause of development. In 1995, the international community had adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, but its implementation had been far from adequate. Young people's situations varied, but their main concerns were the same the world over: fulfilment of their basic needs, access to a good education, access to decent and productive work and the opportunity to live in dignity and peace.

53. On behalf of young people everywhere, she called for better implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth and for full and effective youth participation at all levels. She also drew attention to the new priority areas of the Programme of Action for the coming year. The best way to ensure that young people's voices were heard in the international arena was to send youth delegates from each Member State to United Nations meetings.

54. Young people called for the immediate implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

They were ready to take on responsibilities in their societies and wanted to be given opportunities to help tackle worldwide problems.

55. **Mr. Limon** (Suriname) said that it was regrettable that the implementation of the commitments entered into at the World Summit for Social Development had fallen short of expectations. In order to eradicate poverty, international cooperation should be stepped up to create an enabling environment, including access for developing countries to international economic opportunities. In its development plan for 2006-2011, his Government had restated its commitment to eradicating poverty, providing social protection and ensuring access to quality education, health care and housing. Optimum use of natural and human resources was also critical to the achievement of those aims.

56. The creation of productive employment was a central part of poverty-alleviation efforts. His Government was placing particular emphasis on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. At the same time, cooperation among the Government, the private sector and non-governmental organizations was crucial for broad and inclusive development. Despite the budgetary constraints it faced, the Government was committed to allocating resources to social development. However, national development efforts should be matched by efforts on the part of developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for official development assistance.

57. The past decade had been characterized by unfulfilled promises. The international community had a duty to address inequalities and ensure that impoverished and disadvantaged groups enjoyed the benefits of social and economic development and advances in science and technology. His Government stood ready to contribute to those efforts.

58. **Mr. Jafari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that efforts to fulfil commitments relating to social development continued to be affected by such obstacles and challenges as the ever-growing gap between advanced and developing countries, the adverse repercussions of globalization, increasing poverty and the imposition of various economic sanctions. Without a genuine display of international will, the goals of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly would be difficult to achieve, as would the Millennium Development Goals. His Government attached the utmost importance to the achievement of those goals, for social development was a fundamental human right, a basis for progress and a guarantee of a decent life free of poverty, disease and ignorance. Measures to tackle the root causes of poverty were thus essential, in which context his Government had successfully introduced a series of national development strategies and plans. It had also welcomed the United Nations Literacy Decade and its International Plan of Action, having itself devoted particular attention at the national level to the problem of illiteracy, which should be a priority of development programmes in that it constituted a fundamental obstacle to economic, social and cultural progress. Through his Government's efforts, the extent of the problem in the Syrian Arab Republic had diminished, particularly in rural areas and among women. In fact, the country now had the lowest illiteracy rates in the region.

59. His Government had enacted legislation to safeguard the rights of older persons and had also elaborated a national plan designed to improve health and social care for the ageing. Human development was the core focus of the country's latest five-year development plan, which was fully in line with current economic and social trends. Under the plan, a new system for monitoring and evaluating outcomes was to be elaborated with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of development programmes, projects, goals and strategies, as well as greater competitiveness, higher economic growth rates and better management of resources. On that score, however, the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan was a matter of concern, continuing as it had for decades to deplete the country's human and material resources. For that same reason, overall conditions in the occupied Arab territories were worsening and talk of achieving social development under such circumstances was consequently far-fetched. Over the past few years, developments in the international arena had merely emphasized the need for increased cooperation aimed at solutions for the achievement of human development in each and every country worldwide.

60. **Ms. Rebello** (India) said that the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development contrasted sharply with the measures actually taken to implement them. In the past decade, poverty had increased in 18 countries, of which 14 were in Africa, mainly sub-Saharan Africa. As high growth did not

automatically lead to greater equality and social justice, direct anti-poverty programmes were necessary. Moreover, in the absence of a significant flow of resources and the increased application of science and technology in developing countries, the first Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015 could not be achieved. While private investment was important, the requisite physical and social infrastructure must be developed first.

61. The measures taken by his Government to help eradicate extreme poverty worldwide included providing highly concessional credit lines to West Africa, substantial support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), debt cancellation for Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), duty-free access to the Indian market for exports from the least developed countries and technical cooperation and capacity-building.

62. In India itself, the poverty ratio had fallen from 45 to 26 per cent over the past two decades as a result of numerous governmental initiatives, including the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme and a number of housing, health and food schemes. Those initiatives were expected to reduce the poverty rate by a further 5 per cent by 2007 and an additional 15 per cent by 2012. The Government had also paid close attention to two other core issues identified at the Copenhagen Summit, namely, promoting full and productive employment and fostering social integration. Since education was fundamental for development, it remained committed to achieving the targets set for the United Nations Literacy Decade. Literacy rates in India had risen from 18 per cent in 1951 to around 69 per cent currently, elementary education was recognized as a fundamental right and public spending on education was to be increased. The Government had taken a number of measures to ensure the welfare of older persons, including establishing a National Council for Older People, and was committed to working with the international community to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action. His delegation looked forward to the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

63. Useful lessons learned from the Indian experience were that liberalization of the economy might need to be preceded by economic and scientific capacity-building; that the role of the State was as important as that of the market; that education was the basis for the rapid development of science and technology; and, lastly, that the role of democratic governance was crucial.

64. Mr. Ballestero (Costa Rica), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

65. **Mr. Al Bayati** (Iraq) said that human rights had been at the heart of the United Nations mission since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on Social Progress and Development had listed national independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States as conditions for progress and social development and article 11 had provided for comprehensive social security schemes and social welfare to ensure a proper standard of living. The Iraqi Constitution provided for preservation of the family, protection of motherhood, childhood and old age and guarantees of social and health security in cases of old age, sickness, employment disability, homelessness, orphanhood or unemployment and guaranteed the individual and the family the basic requirements for leading a free and dignified life.

66. The support of the United Nations and the World Bank over the past five years in making Iraq a unified federal democratic country had gone a long way towards helping Iraq achieve sustainability, self-sufficiency, growth and integration into the region and the world. His Government subscribed to the principles of the International Bill of Human Rights and believed that social development would restore to the lives of Iraqi citizens the balance that had been upset by wars and economic sanctions. It would do its utmost to usher in a new era in Iraq characterized by a higher standard of living, employment opportunities, decreased poverty, rural development, improved transport and communications, schools, health care and social guarantees, with a focus on strengthening the family. It still needed support from the international community for its efforts to improve its economy and the lives of its citizens.

67. **Ms. Berlanga** (Mexico) said that poverty eradication was a prerequisite for achieving development. She accordingly endorsed the view expressed in document A/61/99 that the roots and structural causes of poverty must be addressed, that a comprehensive approach was required to respond to the multidimensional nature of poverty, incorporating

measures to promote equity, and that a policy of productive employment and decent work must be pursued. Efforts to help developing countries achieve their social development goals, inter alia, by cancelling their external debt burden, also needed to be redoubled. Her Government recognized the need for measures to ensure that all groups, including the most vulnerable, benefited from development and therefore welcomed the recent finalization of the draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She urged the international community to take the necessary measures for its early adoption and entry into force, since it represented a milestone for such persons and should guarantee full respect for their human rights and equal opportunities for their participation in society.

68. Her Government was also committed to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, whose provisions needed to be incorporated into national development plans. It recognized that the family was the basic unit of society and must therefore be strengthened, inter alia through enhanced development opportunities. Lastly, her delegation considered that the Literacy Monitoring Project should be followed up through the adoption of the necessary policy measures.

69. *Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq) resumed the Chair.*

70. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) reaffirmed his Government's commitment to the social development goals set out in various international declarations and documents over the past decade. The Russian Federation was standing for re-election to the Commission for Social Development and would do its utmost to ensure that the Commission remained the major coordinating body within the United Nations system on the issues of ageing, equal opportunities for persons with disabilities, strengthening the role of the family and improving the situation of young people.

71. Effective social policy was a key component of economic reform efforts in the Russian Federation. Steps were being taken to raise the standard of living through the provision of quality health care and education, access to housing and effective agriculture. Increased resources would be allocated to those areas in the 2007 national budget. The number of people living in poverty had fallen since 2005 and targets had been set for further poverty reduction.

72. Endorsing the proposed new priority areas for the World Programme of Action for Youth, he said that the draft Russian national strategy for youth policy was based on similar priorities. The main aims of the strategy were to improve the situation of young people and enable them to make a greater contribution to national development.

73. Special policies were in place in the Russian Federation for the protection of motherhood, childhood and the family. A project had been introduced in early 2006 to allocate additional resources to medical care for women during pregnancy and childbirth. Steps were also being taken to increase the birth rate, improve the upbringing of children, increase the prestige attached to motherhood and fatherhood and provide reproductive health care.

74. In the context of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, his Government had introduced a new federal programme on social support for persons with disabilities. It also looked forward to the adoption by the General Assembly of the draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

75. His Government was making efforts to address the situation of older people in its social and economic strategies, on the basis of the declaration adopted at the World Assembly on Ageing and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. It was also working on a framework for demographic development up to the year 2015 that took account of issues related to ageing. Almost 40 million Russians were pensioners. Reform of the pension system was therefore of crucial importance. Real growth in pension payments was set to exceed the rate of inflation by 7 per cent in 2007. The replacement of in-kind benefits with monetary benefits and the introduction of a range of social services had also improved the economic and social situation of many older people.

76. His delegation supported the consolidation of United Nations activities in the social sphere and welcomed the concept of an indissociable link between social development, security and human rights.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

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Chairman: Mr. Al-Bayati ..... (Republic of Iraq)

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06-55188 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 60: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/61/99)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*)

(c) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (*continued*) (A/61/151)

(d) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/61/167)

1. **Ms. Faye** (Senegal) said that social development was the only way to combat poverty and to resolve employment issues facing young people. Many programmes for the aged, the disabled, women and children had been put in place in Senegal and traditional ways of carrying out development policy had been questioned. The National Programme to combat poverty paid particular attention to vulnerable groups and to the rational use of natural resources.

2. Since problems of food and security were related to other problems such as poor access to clean drinking water, health problems and low labour productivity, a strategic framework for food security had been developed which linked food security, the environment and the fight against poverty. Improving food security was a project which spanned numerous sectors and concerns, including women's issues, agriculture, human resources and rural infrastructure.

3. In order to combat poverty effectively, good governance was required. Thus, Senegal had taken measures to combat corruption, increase transparency, disseminate information about correct procurement procedures and improve public finance practices. Lastly, she stressed the need to integrate disabled persons into society, provide social protection and opportunities for socio-economic and educational advancement to vulnerable groups and ensure respect for their rights.

4. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia), referring to the Secretary-General's report (A/61/99), noted that progress on implementing the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development had been uneven, with some indicators, such as school enrolment and infant mortality, indicating a deceleration of progress in those areas. In order to combat poverty effectively, free and fair trade practices and foreign direct investment were necessary. Indonesia had had very positive experience with small and medium-sized enterprises, which contributed significantly to the country's GDP and to job creation. Accordingly, the Central Bank of Indonesia had set aside nearly $6.5 billion to stimulate the growth of small and medium enterprises.

5. Indonesia's anti-poverty strategy involved the creation of an effective social safety net to include human resources development, infrastructure-building and food security. Programmes in the social sector would improve access to and quality of education, health, family planning and other services. In helping the disabled, Indonesia would be guided by the international Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its Government provided income support to older persons in six provinces and such assistance might be extended to other provinces in the near future.

6. **Mr. Chaderton Matos** (the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the eradication of poverty was a moral imperative. Poverty was a violation of human rights. The response to poverty must be based on the principles of social inclusion and equal rights for all. Social development involved a better distribution of wealth and went beyond representative democracy to participatory democracy.

7. UNESCO had declared his country free of illiteracy in 2005. It guaranteed medical assistance free of charge 24 hours a day to 17 million people. Over 100 types of medication were available free of charge at clinics, including medication for HIV/AIDS. Cuba had provided doctors for programmes in Venezuela. The Venezuelan Government also provided free eye operations, 56,000 of which had been performed in 2005. There were plans to extend such projects to other countries in Latin America, and people from other Latin American countries came to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for eye treatment. Millions of people benefited from Government food programmes and job training.

8. It was necessary to look at the root causes of poverty and to help countries achieve social development goals by eliminating the overwhelming burden of external debt. Under President Hugo Chavez, the Government had overcome illiteracy, with assistance from Cuba, increased school enrolment and provided basic education through the sixth grade for people who had been excluded from the formal education sector. Education was a weapon for freedom.

9. Social development was an element of Venezuelan foreign policy. That point of view was promoted in the hemisphere through the *Social Charter of the Americas* and through a Venezuelan alternative approach to trade called ALBA based on relations of cooperation, sovereignty and solidarity to build alliances, encourage economic growth, promote social inclusion and overcome inequality. That mechanism served to develop a sovereign public policy and sovereign control of natural resources to alleviate the sufferings of Latin and Caribbean peoples in the areas of social justice, social development and democracy.

10. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that in the last decade or so, poverty eradication had become very much a part of the international development agenda. However, unless the fight for poverty eradication was intensified and coordinated globally and nationally, many countries would fail to cut poverty in half by the target year of 2015. Eritrea was committed to the goals of the World Summit for Social Development and the creation of a more equitable social system focusing on the concerns of vulnerable groups. Eritrea was making serious efforts to rehabilitate the economic, social and physical infrastructure of the country and was guided by principles of equity and equality in its delivery of social services nationwide.

11. It was important that Governments be given the opportunity to determine home-grown poverty reduction strategies reflecting specific conditions and priorities in each country. In Eritrea, all able-bodied persons, particularly young people, were mobilized in a national programme, allowing development to be broad based and participatory. The link between literacy and development was clear. Eritrea's long-standing commitment to adult literacy had been recognized by the *UNESCO 2002 International Reading Association Literacy Award*. The country had increased literacy training completion rates from 33 per cent to 68 per cent between 1993 and 2000, created reading materials in eight Eritrean languages and linked literacy, skills training and demobilization of soldiers.

12. Issues of persons with disabilities were a priority for the Government of Eritrea, whose policy objectives included ensuring greater integration of persons with disabilities into society and providing access to health and rehabilitation services, education, job training and economic opportunities. Eritrea welcomed the adoption of the draft Comprehensive Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Ad Hoc Committee, and hoped for its adoption at the current session of the General Assembly.

13. **Ms. Johns** (Jamaica), speaking as Youth Ambassador, expressed her appreciation of General Assembly resolution 60/2, which encouraged youth participation in national delegations and had enabled her to address the Committee, in accordance with the tenet of the Jamaica National Youth Policy that all youth had the right to participate in decision-making that affected their well-being. Several United Nations measures sought to address the deterioration of the status of youth worldwide, who faced growing levels of unemployment, poverty and epidemics. While overall conditions had improved in the past decade, there was overwhelming evidence that more needed to be done. Accordingly, the World Youth Report 2005 had outlined 10 priority areas targeted by the General Assembly for the social development of youth, which included poverty, unemployment and health.

14. Although Jamaica, with help from a number of United Nations assistance programmes, had achieved a gradual reduction of the percentage of young people living in poverty, 20 per cent were still living in conditions of poverty as of 1998. Unemployment had many adverse social effects, poverty being the harshest. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) could play a greater role by facilitating large-scale microcredit financing exclusively for young entrepreneurs, which would reinforce entrepreneurial behaviour and self-sufficiency.

15. Jamaican youth continued to be affected by the scourge of HIV/AIDS, with an estimated 10,000 young people in the 15-24 age group infected. It was evident that the virus could have a devastating effect on any society, let alone small island developing States like her own, decimating the youth labour force. Jamaica had adopted a five-pronged approach to the problem, which included HIV/STI surveillance, treatment and

care. She was grateful for the assistance that her country had received from the United Nations system in combating HIV/AIDS, Goal 6 of the Millennium Development Goals, to which her country was fully committed. Another negative aspect of the disease was discrimination against infected youth, especially in the workplace, which could not but swell the ranks of unemployed young people. In conclusion, she underscored the importance of the unity symbolized by the United Nations and said that her country would assign the highest priority to the promotion of social progress, justice and enhancement of the human condition, based on the full participation of all.

16. **Mr. Otte** (Netherlands) said that his work as a youth representative of his country had sent him, among other places, to the slums of Hyderabad, where his first-hand look at poverty had impressed upon him the fact that Dutch youth were much more privileged than their peers in the slums. Injustice caused by social, political and economic inequality was widespread; it crossed borders and affected all people.

17. While young people in the Netherlands had the opportunity to attend school and could not hold a proper job before the age of 16, some 218 million under-age children in the developing world were obliged to work to support their families and simply could not go to school. While the Internet provided young people in the developed countries with an excellent opportunity for cultural interaction, the only advanced technology seen by young people trapped in war-torn regions was the weapons that disrupted their lives. Young people were the world's biggest stakeholders, but many had no say in national and international decision-making. The United Nations had the power to do something about inequality in education and political participation and should also focus on the impact of new technology on armed conflict. Social exclusion, discrimination and inequality could be overcome if the focus was placed on the humanity shared by everyone, regardless of racial, social, economic or political differences. Solidarity was one of the eight elements of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace.

18. He drew attention to three projects based on solidarity and humanity: the MV Foundation, dedicated to eliminating child labour and establishing universal primary education in Andhra Pradesh in southern India; the UNICEF-supported Return to Happiness programme, in which young volunteers — themselves often survivors — gave therapeutic support to young people coping with loss due to conflicts or natural disasters in many countries of the world; and the participation of youth delegations to conferences and meetings. Accordingly, he urged Member States to fulfil their political, social and economic commitment to bring about a world founded on equality and shared humanity. They must abolish the age discrepancy between ILO Convention No. 138 and Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals; launch a proactive campaign to provide young people with opportunities for decent and meaningful work, making them less likely to join disruptive factions; and bring a Youth Delegate to the General Assembly.

19. **Mr. Baja** (Philippines) said that poverty involved not only economic and social exclusion, but also the denial of human rights. There was a need to further integrate economic and social goals and policies, since focusing on economic goals alone could lead to greater social disparities, polarization and exclusion. While the multidimensional nature of poverty was more widely acknowledged, recognition of the links between its social aspects and the macroeconomic architecture had not really been reflected in policies. In that connection, his Government was intensifying implementation of the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010. Its more focused and integrated action strategies included promoting livelihood, strengthening education, attaining fiscal stability, decentralized development and achieving sustained national harmony.

20. The developing countries were grateful to those developed countries that had honoured their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) to that cause. In that context, he encouraged them, as well as the international financial institutions, to consider the innovative Philippine proposal of "debt-for-equity in Millennium Development Goals projects", which, far from seeking debt forgiveness, cancellation, moratoriums or discounts, merely invited creditor countries, multilateral institutions and large commercial banks voluntarily to plough back into the debtor countries' economies 50 per cent of an agreed portion of debt service payments due to them in the form of equities and channelled to appropriate projects of their choice. He also advocated continued discussion of the way in which remittances could best serve as an engine of sustainable development, a topic raised at the recent

High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.

21. His Government implemented plans and programmes for the empowerment, protection and equal participation of vulnerable groups. In that context, he welcomed the recently concluded negotiations of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and hoped that the ensuing Convention would be scrupulously implemented, especially in the developing countries, home to the majority of the world's disabled, who were among the poorest of the poor. International cooperation was needed to ensure that such persons enjoyed the fruits of development.

22. Stressing the importance of providing decent and productive jobs, he said his country had focused on the plight of its youth, employing the four major strategies of employment generation, preservation, facilitation and enhancement. Young people had access to capacity-building programmes in a variety of areas, including employment opportunities and skills enhancement for economic empowerment. An enabling environment was indeed crucial to equity and social development, and enhanced partnerships among Governments, civil society and the private sector had greatly contributed to progress in that regard. Accordingly, he urged the international community to continue to work collectively on the ethical, social, political and economic imperatives of eradicating poverty.

23. **Mr. Newang** (Nepal) thanked the international community for its the moral support and assistance that had enabled Nepal to undertake the transformation to a multiparty democratic polity and the restoration of democracy and economic and social development, as a result of the success of the People's Movement in April 2006.

24. With more than 85 per cent of Nepalese living in rural areas, the national development plan focused on improving the well-being of inhabitants of rural and remote areas. However, population growth, poverty, inadequate infrastructure development and primitive industrial development posed daunting challenges. In addition, in the past decade the people of Nepal had been exposed to violence and armed conflict, destruction of development infrastructure and public property, and the suppression and violation of human rights, the brunt of which had been felt by women, children, youth and the elderly.

25. The Government, committed to the successful conclusion of the peace process through dialogue and to the holding of free and fair elections as soon as possible, would be implementing development policies and programmes to enhance poor people's quality of life and promote the inclusion of deprived communities, regions and ethnic groups with a view to eradicating social injustice. It had adopted a policy of decentralization to enable local authorities to formulate, implement and monitor development programmes. It also attached great importance to partnership with civil society and non-governmental organizations and was committed to ensuring 33 per cent participation of women at all decision-making levels.

26. The integration of economic and social policies should focus on poverty eradication. It would be helpful if there were greater access to markets in the developed countries for products from the developing countries so that the latter could achieve sustained economic growth and mitigate the negative effects of globalization. His delegation called for a coherent and concerted approach by the international community to social development. He welcomed the finalization of the draft international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and urged implementation of the Madrid Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing; the gender dimension should also be taken into account when the problems of older persons were addressed.

27. Nepal was fully committed to implementing all the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the Brussels Programme of Action. He, therefore, urged the international community to step up its financial and technical assistance to the least developed countries in the light of their special needs and situations, such as those emerging from conflicts, land-locked developing States and small island developing States.

28. **Mr. Muburi-Muita** (Kenya) appealed to the development partners and the international community to work in partnership with Africa to address the challenges facing the continent. His country had implemented policies and programmes to address social problems, including through an economic

recovery strategy for wealth and employment creation for the period 2003-2007 and the implementation of a free and compulsory primary education system, which put Kenya on course for achieving the goal of universal, free compulsory education by the target date. Health services were also subsidized, particularly for HIV/AIDS-related illnesses, malaria and maternal and child health care.

29. Steps had also been taken to address challenges in the agricultural sector, the main source of income in sub-Saharan Africa, employing as it did 90 per cent of the rural population. In order to address the many hindrances to agricultural development, a national Roads Board and district road committees had been established to improve the rural transport infrastructure. A second window coffee auction now enabled coffee farmers to sell their produce directly to buyers. The Agricultural Finance Corporation had been revived and enhanced to provide credit, and a mechanism in the Ministry of Agriculture provided revived extension services to farmers. Development partners were encouraged to help fund such measures, and developed countries were called upon to increase market access for Kenyan products.

30. In the area of health, the Government had created institutional frameworks and structures to arrest the spread of pandemics and alleviate their effects. The prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS had been reduced from 14 per cent to 6.1 per cent in 15 years, and infected persons now had increased access to retroviral drugs, voluntary counselling and testing centres and so on. A roll-back malaria strategy aimed to reduce the level of infection by 30 per cent and sustain that level until 2010. But international support through funding, capacity-building and equipment in the form of contributions to the Global Fund was sorely needed. A Ministry for Youth Affairs had been established to assist young people, who accounted for 60 per cent of the population, as well as a Youth Fund to finance programmes for youth employment opportunities. But all those measures were not sufficient to reduce poverty without trade liberalization and access to the markets of the developed countries, while resources had been mobilized to fund social development, including through enhanced tax and revenue collection, accelerated war on corruption, and reallocation of funds from other sectors, they were not enough.

31. **Ms. Laohaphan** (Thailand) said that, at the end of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, poverty had declined in absolute terms, but progress in eliminating it had been slow and uneven. Member States must redouble their efforts and keep their promises, as more than enough pledges and targets had failed to yield results. Thailand remained committed to partnerships for development, whether in the form of South-South cooperation, or in the form of trilateral cooperation with developed countries and international agencies. The United Nations played an important role in improving policy coherence and coordination.

32. Aid alone would not suffice to help countries emerge from the poverty trap. They must be given equal opportunities to use trade to achieve that goal. The Doha Round of international trade negotiations, which must be continued, would have an important influence on social development at national and international levels. Moreover, economic growth was not enough to combat poverty. In fact, it could sometimes worsen poverty. The international community must address both actual and perceived economic inequality between and within countries to ensure that economic benefits were distributed evenly to all sectors of society. Success in the pursuit of peace and security, development and human rights depended on success in that endeavour, particularly as perceived injustice had led to resentment and violence in many parts of the world.

33. For development to be truly sustainable and equitable, people must be placed at the centre of economic and social development policy. Empowerment was a key concern, but had not been given enough priority in international development cooperation. The United Nations and international agencies should mainstream it into their policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels. As employment and the ability to earn a decent living were an important source of empowerment and dignity, the Ministerial Declaration on Employment Generation and Decent Work adopted at the 2006 session of the Economic and Social Council should be implemented fully and effectively. Achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all was critical to the development of a healthy society and to making globalization more humane and equitable.

34. Empowerment was needed not just at the individual and group level, but also at the community and national level. Literacy and education were important to unlocking human potential. Thailand

therefore supported implementation of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), urged international agencies to ensure closer coordination and coherence with other initiatives sharing the same goal, such as Education for All and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and supported the integration of those initiatives into broader efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals.

35. Acknowledging that its society had become one of the many that were ageing, Thailand had taken steps to mainstream that issue into national development plans and programmes through legislation and plans of action. It had also worked closely with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to study the impact of HIV/AIDS on the economic, social, health and emotional status of older persons. It looked forward to the first five-year review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The historic agreement reached on the text of an International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would ensure that the rights and dignity of over 600 million people had the same recognition as the rights and dignity of others, enabling them to become active agents for the development of their countries.

36. **Mr. Gadirov** (Azerbaijan) said that, although poverty eradication had been a focus of the international community's attention, progress in that regard had been uneven. Any approach to the issue must satisfy people's essential needs, be sustainable, and be matched by national strategies which could address development-related problems.

37. Azerbaijan's own measures had increased gross domestic product growth substantially even between 2005 and 2006, producing a rise in living standards. However, as economic growth alone could not eliminate poverty, measures had been introduced to use the fruits of such growth for sustainable social development and to even out income distribution. The attention of the Government remained focused on meeting social needs and financing the development of the oil industry. In the previous year, with both incomes and the minimum wage considerably higher than before and with inflation relatively low, the Government had increased its expenditure on social protection by 29 per cent and poverty had fallen by the same degree.

38. To eradicate poverty and secure sustainable social development, many policies must be developed and implemented. They included full and productive employment, giving women and young people better access to financial resources, increasing State investment in health and education services and special measures for the vulnerable. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the conclusion of negotiations on an International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which would improve the perception of those individuals, especially women and children, and protect their rights. Between 1995 and 2006, Azerbaijan had improved the legal foundation of its measures to strengthen the social protection and integration into society of persons with disabilities and provide employment and vocational, medical and social support. Job quotas had been established for the disabled and for other vulnerable groups, as they were the most exposed to the harsh consequences of the market.

39. As the State Statistical Committee, the United Nations Development Programme and the International Labour Organization had determined that 69 per cent of the unemployed in Azerbaijan were under 35, youth unemployment was a particular focus for the Government. Long-term unemployment was a serious problem for the refugees and internally displaced persons who were victims of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Like other countries in Europe, Azerbaijan was confronted with an ageing population. It must defend the rights of older people and improve social protection for them. In that connection, the review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing should reinforce cooperation in approaching such issues.

40. **Mr. Pekarchuk** (Ukraine), said that the review by the Commission for Social Development of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, along with the outcomes of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and the 2005 World Summit, would provide important food for thought for the General Assembly at its current session.

41. Eradicating poverty was a top concern for the Government of Ukraine, which was translating international policy into national programmes, including recent legislative initiatives. The August 2006 National Unity Pact, signed by the members of the coalition Government, recognized the threat of social disintegration and the fact that poverty must be

tackled by examining its root causes. While Governments must take primary responsibility for policies in that regard, they could form partnerships with the private sector and international organizations. Accordingly, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Ukraine for 2006 to 2010 had put forward a "prosperity against poverty" approach. Ukraine acknowledged that there was much work still to do, and was determined to build a knowledge-based economy to serve the needs of development.

42. **Ms. Farfán** (El Salvador) said that El Salvador had established a País Seguro ("safe country") plan focusing on health, education, housing and consolidation of society and the family. It was fully consistent with the outcome of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, gave priority to public investment, generating employment opportunities, combating poverty and improving basic services, and aimed to foster human capital and equity between all Salvadorans.

43. Recognizing that poverty led not only to precarious living conditions, but also to economic and environmental vulnerability and marginalization from the political process, El Salvador undertook to expand participation in implementing international commitments, including those of the World Summit for Social Development, and the Millennium Development Goals. Its policies regarding poverty, health and education focused on integrated local development. In a break from past practice, services centred on the family rather than the individual, as it was families, and more accurately women, who made decisions about access to basic services. Moreover, the family setting was the appropriate place to tackle the factors which tended to perpetuate poverty from generation to generation.

44. The 14th conference of First Ladies and representatives of the Heads of State and Government of the Americas, which would be held in El Salvador in 2007, would take up the issue of older persons and review progress in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. In the recent past, El Salvador had also hosted a forum on rehabilitation for young people who were at risk or had been in trouble with the law, as part of its approach to the social, economic, cultural and security consequences of youth gang activity. It welcomed the conclusion of negotiations on an International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which it hoped to ratify rapidly.

45. Having adopted a people-centred development focus, El Salvador recognized the complexity of poverty and the fact that income was not the only issue involved; there were others, including nutrition, housing, social exclusion, vulnerability, education, opportunities for decent employment, health and participation in society. It remained committed to international efforts to eradicate poverty.

46. **Mr. Alsubeihi** (Yemen) said that the Secretary-General, in his report on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development (A/61/99), had highlighted the many costs of failing to carry out the commitments made at the Summit. Yemen reiterated its commitment to working with civil society, the private sector and international organizations to further development. The international community could not live up to the expectations of people without forming a partnership between developed and developing countries. There could be no development for all without equality of opportunity, which required consideration of the circumstances and debt burdens of developing countries, along with wider market access and elimination of tariffs. Developing countries must commit themselves to good governance, combat corruption and make rational use of development assistance.

47. Acknowledging that social development could not be achieved without economic development, Yemen had established a poverty-eradication strategy based on health and education, and had established an anti-corruption committee. To encourage those involved in agriculture and fisheries, it was providing access to credit. Also acknowledging the link between education and development, it had worked with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as part of the United Nations Literacy Decade, to improve education, school curriculums and school equipment. Its legislation guaranteed access to education for all, with compulsory attendance throughout primary school. By 2005, 60 per cent of the population had access to health care, compared to the previous rate of 38 per cent. The Government had also focused on implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and had established a fund to provide pensions. It welcomed the agreement on an International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

48. **Ms. Kafanabo** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that in the light of the uneven progress made in achieving the goals set out at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, namely vis-à-vis the three core issues of poverty eradication, full employment and social integration, more concerted efforts needed to be made towards implementing the Copenhagen Programme of Action. In that regard, she welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendations contained in his report on follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/61/99).

49. To meet the goals set out under the Copenhagen Programme of Action since its adoption, her Government had undertaken a number of measures, such as the implementation of its 2004-2010 National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, which addressed social issues such as employment, youth, gender and HIV/AIDS and incorporated good governance and accountability measures. She wished to thank the United Nations system and development partners for their support in the implementation of that strategy.

50. The Government had taken measures to assist youth in facing unemployment and underemployment, an issue that was particularly relevant in rural areas, such as through a programme to encourage youth to form economic ventures through microcredit support, intensifying their vocational training and helping them to form savings and credit associations. To ensure that microcredit was an effective tool to reduce poverty, it was important to accurately assess borrowers' different credit needs and ensure that informal ownership of land could be taken into account to secure loans. In that regard, the Government had initiated a programme to promote and formalize extra-legal economic activities with a view to providing equal opportunities for all Tanzanian citizens and empower them for self-development. The Government's aim was to address income and poverty issues through economic growth at the grass-roots level. To address the employment issue for all its citizens, the Government had reviewed its labour policies and laws and put in place an employment strategy to create one million jobs by 2010.

51. With regard to ageing, the Government was committed to implementing the Madrid Plan of Action, had put in place a policy on ageing, and had incorporated relevant issues in its National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty. Its biggest challenge was to provide social protection for older persons, whose lives were further constrained by having to care for those struck by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, including children whose parents had lost their lives to the disease. Her Government welcomed the draft convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, and had put in place a policy for persons with disabilities which emphasized the mainstreaming of relevant issues in all programmes and policies.

52. To address the increase in the illiteracy rate, the Government had set up an adult and informal education strategy, in partnership with civil society, to ensure that out-of-school children, youth and adults and especially girls, women, disadvantaged groups and nomads, had access to quality basic learning opportunities. Her Government recognized the role that civil society played in helping it to implement social development programmes. Many challenges were still ahead in realizing the goals of the World Summit for Social Development, and concerted efforts to honour the commitments made were critical.

53. **Mr. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that Qatar was committed to the promotion of social justice and the preservation of traditional and universal values. His Government had various policies, programmes and legislation in place to ensure social development for its people, thus enhancing the status of women, children, youth, the elderly, the family and persons with disabilities. There was a strong spirit of civic community in Qatar, which the Government complemented through comprehensive services in universal quality education and primary health care.

54. Implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action at all levels was crucial. However, that objective had been somewhat eclipsed over the past years. An inclusive "society for all" had been set out as an aim of the World Summit for Social Development. In that regard, while discussion on two core issues — poverty eradication and employment — had been prominent in several forums, the third core issue of social integration needed to be further addressed, especially in the Third Committee and the Commission for Social Development. Social integration needed to be assessed in terms of modalities, methods and magnitude, and should be the subject of more intense global dialogue, as should the

issues of social cohesion and development. In that regard, his delegation would welcome efforts by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in developing regional and subregional perspectives on social integration.

55. His country welcomed the recommendations made by the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) vis-à-vis the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade. With regard to follow-up on the Second World Assembly on Ageing, he supported the commendable work of the Division for Social Policy and Development and its Programme on Ageing in particular, which should focus on national capacity-building. In that regard, enhancing the technical assistance capabilities of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the context of implementing the Madrid Plan of Action was imperative. Lastly, he welcomed that agreement had been reached on the text of the draft convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and looked forward to its adoption by the General Assembly.

56. **Mr. Sadykov** (Kazakhstan) said that social development issues should continue to be priority items on the agenda of the main bodies of the United Nations. The full realization of development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals, could only be possible through a firm commitment by Member States to a global partnership for development at the international and regional levels. Kazakhstan had consistently implemented the decisions taken at Copenhagen, Madrid and other international conferences on social development and remained committed to the timely achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by carrying out a long-term strategy of its own.

57. Economic growth alone was not enough to alleviate poverty; economic policies needed to focus on social equity in order to ensure quality growth and equal distribution of benefits. Accordingly, Kazakhstan had been increasing its social spending in line with its economic growth, primarily in health care, education and employment, with the aim of raising its population's living standard. The country had a series of national programmes to eliminate poverty, such as the programme on the development of agricultural territories and the programme on poverty eradication, which had reduced the number of persons with incomes below the subsistence minimum by half. Furthermore, the Government was focusing particular attention on developing the private sector and facilitating access to microfinancing, to ensure productive employment and decent work. It also had a National Youth Programme for 2006-2007 to tackle the country's high youth unemployment rate, and a package of measures for the social protection of students.

58. Kazakhstan had also instituted a number of measures to provide education for its population, including compulsory primary education which covered 99.5 per cent of its population. The country was now focusing on improving the quality of education, through free higher education and vocational training and education loans. The Kazakh Government had pension system reforms under way to improve the accrual system, and had instituted compulsory individual health insurance to improve the quality of life of the elderly. The average pensions had been doubled in the last five years.

59. Kazakhstan welcomed the completion of work on the draft convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, had adopted a law on the social protection of persons with disabilities in 2005, and was implementing a national programme on rehabilitation of persons with disabilities for 2006-2008. In conclusion, he called for Member States and specialized United Nations agencies to take coordinated actions to carry out their obligations vis-à-vis the Millennium Development Goals and other social development instruments.

60. **Mr. Nsemi** (Congo) said that ten years after the World Summit for Social Development, socio-economic disparities remained between rich and developing countries. Efforts to eradicate poverty had generally been slow, imbalanced, and sometimes, inexistent, as had unfortunately been the case in sub-Saharan Africa. Additional efforts were needed at all levels in order to fulfil the objectives for the current decade. To that end, poverty reduction was a cornerstone of his country's development policy, as evidenced through the social objectives set out in its development priorities. Furthermore, with the support of development partners, his country had drawn up a detailed programme for 2004-2009, in line with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP).

61. The Government had increased its budget investment in activities to alleviate poverty, and efforts had been made to lift the State out of its social debt, in

order to provide assistance to the working population and improve the domestic debt situation in general. To help improve the quality of life for Congolese citizens, more than 1,000 social housing units were being built, and a housing bank and national housing fund had been established to facilitate middle-income citizens' access to housing. To tackle the youth unemployment situation, which was of particular concern, the Government had set up an intersectoral committee to foster employment, involving the public and private sectors as well as civil society. That had led to the creation of more than 30,000 jobs over the past three years. With the help of international financial institutions, his Government had worked towards the reintegration of young ex-combatants, helping to reintegrate more than 7,000 youths through a national programme. He expressed his Government's appreciation for the funding received from the World Bank and the European Union in that regard.

62. In the light of the expanding phenomenon of poverty in his country and in Africa, a phenomenon which, in particular, affected women in rural areas, the Government faced the challenge of adapting its infrastructures, ensuring adequate management of human resources and access to global markets, as well as contending with the impact of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases. In order to address the Congolese farming sector's inability to meet the population's food needs, due to the low level of investment and the lack of affordable technologies, the Government had developed a number of initiatives under a special programme for food security, and had created a fund to boost farming activities and developed a microfinancing scheme. Nevertheless, more efforts still needed to be deployed to help the country overcome its heavy debt burden, lack of domestic savings, and low level of foreign direct investment, namely in non-oil sectors. The Copenhagen commitments and Millennium Development Goals could only be achieved through concerted efforts by all countries, rich and poor. His country would continue to play its part in those efforts.

63. **Ms. Abubakar** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that her delegation supported the report submitted by the Secretary-General, which included a review of the uneven progress made by States in reducing poverty. The eradication of poverty, still a major obstacle to the achievement of social development goals, required national strategies developed through combined national and international efforts. Her country was greatly concerned at the slow rate of development in some countries and called on the international community to live up to the promises made within the framework of official development assistance and to increase effective multilateral cooperation. It expressed its deep regret over the failure to arrive at positive findings in the review of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) that had taken place during the forty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development.

64. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had provided financing, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization, to numerous development projects for Africa, including several within the framework of the food security programme, and had expressed its willingness to extend those projects to additional African countries. It had also launched the Al-Qadhafi project for African youth, children and women in cooperation with the international organizations concerned.

65. Libya reaffirmed its full commitment to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, a commitment that involved a series of measures and economic and social policies aimed at optimal utilization of the Jamahiriya's human resources and a balanced improvement in social and economic conditions for both individuals and society, based on full participation in decision-making. The country's development plans accorded extreme importance to youth and education and to social and health services, provided free of charge to widows, the disabled and other vulnerable groups. In its current budget, moreover, several billion dollars had been appropriated for loans to young persons to set up small businesses or build private homes.

66. Lastly, her country greatly valued the efforts made towards the drafting of a comprehensive convention on the protection of the rights of disabled persons and hoped that the General Assembly would adopt the draft during the current session. It urged all States to take the convention as a basis for adopting policies for the social inclusion of persons with special needs.

67. **Mr. Adekanye** (Nigeria) said that the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly was vital for

countries to achieve social development and eradicate poverty. In that regard, his Government had placed the three core issues of the eradication of poverty, the promotion of full employment and the fostering of social integration at the heart of its national action plan. It had developed the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, which focused on reorienting values, reducing poverty, creating wealth and generating employment.

68. Other measures included assistance to farmers, improving education for children, improving health-care delivery, reform of the pension scheme, and laws and programmes to empower women, children, the disabled and the elderly. The introduction of universal primary education had dramatically increased the number of young people with basic skills, and steps had been taken to raise the adult literacy level. In that regard, his delegation was grateful to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its support to the country's national educational plan.

69. Turning to the matter of the welfare of persons with disabilities in Nigeria, he pointed out that social welfare departments had been established in all relevant ministries at the federal and state levels. Nigeria would continue to do its utmost to involve people with disabilities in relevant national policies at all levels of government and integrate the promotion and protection of their human rights into national plans and programmes. He welcomed the international community's resolve to strengthen global partnerships, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in particular, and hoped that support to NEPAD would be continued and that the commitment to support the African Union's initiative for all children to have access to complete, free and compulsory primary education by 2015 would be translated into action. He looked forward to active participation with other delegations in achieving the targets set at the World Summit for Social Development.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.